

VZCZCXRO9789
OO RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #4128/01 3090852
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 050852Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7861
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004128

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/04/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES KURDISH PESHMERGA FORCE WITH
IRAQI PM

REF: BAGHDAD 3724

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In an October 30 meeting, the Ambassador urged PM Maliki to resolve differences between the GOI and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) on Kurdish Peshmerga fighters. The Ambassador flagged possibly-problematical KRG proposals and offered USG help in developing workable options. The Ambassador also questioned the proposed integration into the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) of 480 Badr militia members; the PM agreed this should not happen. End Summary.

Ambassador Urges Resolution of Peshmerga Issue

¶2. (C) The Ambassador raised an October 10 meeting between the GOI and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) on the issue of transforming Kurdish Peshmerga fighters into a regional force. The KRG is proposing maintaining current relatively-high Peshmerga force levels, 120,000 active duty and 70,000 reserves, and other possibly-problematical ideas about the Peshmerga's mission. State Minister for Council of Representatives Affairs Safa al-Safi, the GOI representative at the meeting, had objected to various KRG proposals but had not come forth with any ideas on behalf of the GOI. The Ambassador offered USG help in developing workable plans and options regarding the Peshmerga.

¶3. (C) The PM welcomed the offer and said the issue would be resolved "calmly" with the KRG. The PM emphasized the importance of keeping the Peshmerga within the boundaries set forth by Iraq's Constitution. He noted that if other regions are formed, they will demand the same powers the Peshmerga have for their regional forces, posing the danger Iraq would become "a conglomeration of armies." The Peshmerga are in fact a militia, the PM added. He expressed concern that a force size the KRG proposed would require a greater GOI budget allocation than what the GOI currently sets aside for the KRG.

Serious Unresolved Peshmerga Issues

¶4. (C) Serious Peshmerga-related issues between the GOI and KRG remain to be resolved:

-- Force size: The KRG wants to retain the 190,000-strong level; the PM conceded such a large force will create "imbalances".

-- Force mission: The KRG defines the Peshmerga's mission as "defending the unity of Kurdistan, its people, and its land from any aggression wherever it may originate" -- notably omitting any mission to defend the rest of Iraq from internal or external threats. Under this mission statement, the Peshmerga has no duty to defend the rest of Iraq from an

external attack, nor to assist the GOI during any serious internal disturbance.

-- Command and control: Under the KRG draft Constitution, the KRG President is commander in chief of the peshmerga; there is no higher authority and the GOI appears nowhere in the chain of command. There is no provision for command and control to pass to the GOI under any circumstances. The KRG President and parliament must approve deployment of Peshmerga outside the KRG.

15. (C) The KRG has set forth its positions on these issues in forcefully and in detail. Beyond objecting to KRG proposals, the GOI has yet to develop a position.

Ministry of Interior

16. (C) The Ambassador gave PM Maliki an Iraqi MOI document showing that the MOI intended to integrate 480 Badr militia members into the MOI at ranks ranging from major to colonel. The PM said their names would be withdrawn, and all except those with special qualifications would be retired or get MOI jobs other than as police officers.

Joint Inspection Team

17. (C) The Ambassador asked the PM about his note regarding a committee to discuss human rights and detainee treatment issues. The PM told the Ambassador the GOI has named officials from GOI Interior, Health, Justice, Defense and Human Rights Ministries to the team, as well as the Cabinet Secretary General, and hopes the team could meet soon with

SIPDIS

BAGHDAD 00004128 002 OF 002

the Embassy; the Ambassador replied that the Embassy would get in touch with the Cabinet Secretary General representatives.
KHALILZAD